

1) Immovable karma

Tibetan: མི་གཡོ་བའི་ལས། - *Mi-yo-wa'i lae* (*Mi* = not, *yo-wa* = move/fluctuate)

Immovable karma constitutes any action that is responsible for rebirth in the celestial form or formless realm. Meritorious and non-meritorious karma are *movable* or *variable* because when one accumulates karma that should bear fruit as a celestial being, under certain circumstances it may instead ripen as rebirth as a human, an animal, or a preta being. Lama Tsongkapa says in his ***Lam Rim Chenmo (Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment)***:

In the desire realm, karma that should bear fruit while you are a deity may instead bear fruit while you are a human, an animal, or a hungry ghost; thus, its effect is variable.

Virtuous projecting karma that determines birth in the form or formless realm, on the other hand, does not move or vary. A projecting karma that should ripen in the region of the first concentration of the form realm, for instance, would never ripen as rebirth in the region of the second concentration. Therefore, it is *immovable* karma.

Vasubhandu says in his ***Abhidharmakosha (Treasury of Knowledge)***:

*Why? Because the fruition of karma
On these levels is not variable.*

Yet another category of karma is:

- 1) Contaminated karma
- 2) Uncontaminated karma

1) Contaminated karma

Tibetan: ཟག་ཅེ་ཀྱི་ལས། - *Zag che kyi lae* (*zag[-pa]* = contamination/defilement, *che* = possess, have)

Contaminated karma refers to actions of body, speech, and mind that are motivated and induced by ignorance and other delusions.

Whatever is a non-virtuous action is necessarily contaminated. Virtuous and neutral actions that are motivated, for instance, by the misperception that grasps onto an inherently existent "I" and "mine", are also contaminated. Such contaminated actions nourish and increase further delusions and contaminated karma in the future.

Furthermore, all projecting and completing karmas are contaminated actions, for the former propel us to take rebirth in cyclic existence and the latter is responsible for the quality of life we have in this existence. In fact, whatever is a contaminated karma is either a projecting or a completing karma.

An Arya, i.e. someone who has directly realized the emptiness of inherent existence and therefore attained the Hinayana or Mahayana path of seeing, does not accumulate any projecting karma anymore. However, until attaining liberation, he or she will continue to accumulate virtuous, non-virtuous, and neutral completing karma.

2) Uncontaminated karma

Tibetan: ཟག་མེད་ཀྱི་ལས། - *Zag me kyi lae* (*me* = not having)

Uncontaminated karma refers to actions of body, speech, and mind that are not induced by delusions but by wisdom and compassion. Examples of uncontaminated karma are the actions of an Arhat or a Buddha.

This completes a brief presentation of karma and of the second noble truth.

3. THE TRUTH OF CESSATION

In general, a truth of cessation refers to the complete and irreversible elimination of an obstruction to liberation or enlightenment.

The three, self-liberation, Nirvana, and the truth of cessation *in the continuum of an Arhat*, are equivalent. They are basically different names for the same referent object.

The truth of cessation in the continuum of an Arhat refers to the complete and irreversible elimination of the root ignorance and its seed. In this way it also constitutes the complete and irreversible elimination of everything that is induced by the root ignorance, namely:

- all the other delusions (such as anger, attachment, etc.) and their seeds,
- contaminated physical, verbal, and mental karma, and
- suffering

Hence, by relinquishing the root ignorance one naturally also overcomes all the afflictive awarenesses and experiences that are induced by that ignorance.

Such an elimination or cessation of the root ignorance etc. is obtained by Theravada/Hinayana practitioners when they reach the Hinayana path of no more learning, i.e. when they reach the state of a Hinayana Arhat. Moreover, it is attained by Mahayana practitioners or Bodhisattvas, who previously did not obtain the Hinayana goal, when they reach the eighth Bodhisattva bhumi, i.e. the state of a Mahayana Arhat. Hence, the cessation of afflictive obstructions exists in the continua of both Hinayana and Mahayana Arhats.

Furthermore, this cessation is the mere *absence* of ignorance etc. and therefore permanent. The definition of permanent is: **a phenomenon that is not momentary**. The definition of impermanent is: **that which is momentary**. To be momentary does not mean to merely exist for one moment, but to *change* moment by moment. Also, it does not mean that something that is impermanent changes every moment into something completely different, for momentary change can be extremely subtle. For instance, even though the molecules that constitute a table change momentarily (which is why we have to say that the table is momentary) the table does not cease to be a table from moment to moment. In fact, its change is so subtle that it is not directly obvious to us.

Thus, whatever is impermanent is necessarily a phenomenon that changes moment by moment whereas whatever is permanent is necessarily a phenomenon that does not change moment by moment.

However, there is a difference between being permanent and being eternal.

In fact there are four possibilities between something that is permanent and something that is eternal:

- (I) *Whatever is permanent is not necessarily eternal*: for instance, the absence of elephant in this room is permanent because as long as no elephant enters the room the absence of elephant in this room exists as a negative phenomenon, which does not change moment by moment. However the absence of elephant in this room is not eternal, for it does not exist forever. It ceases to exist the moment an elephant enters the room.
Likewise, the lack of inherent existence of a car is permanent because it is the mere absence of inherent existence and thus does not change moment by moment. Nevertheless, the lack of inherent existence of the car is not eternal because it ceases to exist the moment the car goes out of existence.
- (II) *Whatever is eternal is not necessarily permanent*: For instance, your mind is eternal because it has existed since beginningless time and will continue to exist forever. However, it is also impermanent because it changes every second. Every moment it takes on different objects and engages in its objects in a different way; sometimes it merely observes them, sometimes it reflects on them, at other times it judges or enjoys them.
- (III) *There is something that is both permanent and eternal*: For instance the lack of inherent existence of the mind is permanent because it is the mere absence of inherent existence. At the same time it is eternal because its basis is eternal and because there is no mind that does not lack inherent existence.
- (IV) *There is something that is neither permanent nor eternal*: For instance, the table in front of you is impermanent because it changes moment by moment and it is not eternal, for one day it will break and cease to be a table.

Therefore, even though the truth of cessation is permanent this does not contradict the fact that such a cessation did not always exist but was at some point newly achieved. For instance, a Hinayana practitioner, in order to obtain the truth of cessation of afflictive obstructions, first needs to cultivate the antidote to the root ignorance, which is the wisdom that directly realizes the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena. Through continuous familiarity with that wisdom he or she is able to gradually eliminate the different layers of ignorance, their seeds, etc. until he or she overcomes the subtlest level of ignorance etc. and thus newly obtains the truth of cessation of afflictive obstructions, Nirvana, or liberation.

